

NAVAL WAR COLLEGE  
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**PME, LESSONS LEARNED,  
AND THE  
JOINT OPERATIONAL COMMANDER**

by

Stephen E. Gebert

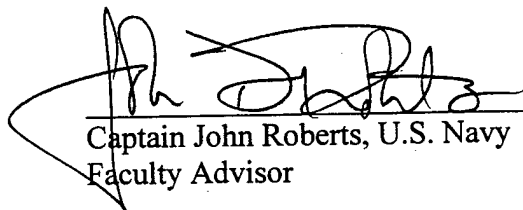
Lieutenant Commander, United States Navy

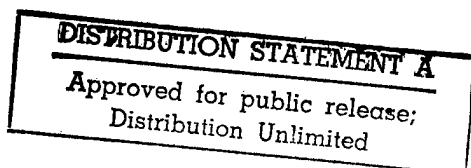
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The Contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

Signature: Stephen E. Gebert

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Captain John Roberts, U.S. Navy  
Faculty Advisor



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## **Abstract of**

### **PME, LESSONS LEARNED, AND THE JOINT OPERATIONAL COMMANDER**

This paper proposes, that for any operational commander to be truly successful, he or she must be able to draw on the full spectrum of lessons learned available. This spectrum consists of both lessons learned from the study of military history and theory, and of lessons learned from modern operations, exercises and training events. The first part of the paper discusses the great benefit of studying military history and theory for both the direct lessons learned to be gained, and for training the mind to think operationally. This mental agility is critical to the success of the operational commander during a campaign or crisis when faced with unexpected events due to the fog and friction of war.

The next part of the paper examines the current officer Professional Military Education programs of each of the armed services. The Marine Corps, with only a minor improvement in focus required, has the most in-depth program, followed closely by that of the Army. The Air Force program is also on track, but lacks the frequency and depth of the first two. The Navy's program is found to be severely lacking in this critical area of officer professional development. Shortcomings of the war colleges are also examined. It is then recommended that all of the services reevaluate their PME programs with respect to the importance and focus placed on the study of military history and theory.

The last part of the paper shows how difficult it is for current operational commanders to draw on modern lessons learned from past operations and exercises using the current Joint Universal Lessons Learned System (JULLS) database. The final section discusses the merits of establishing a National Lessons Learned Support Team (NLLST) to directly support the Joint Force Commander (JFC) in overcoming these difficulties during times of crisis.

## *INTRODUCTION AND THESIS*

Being able to draw on the full spectrum of past operational lessons learned is critical for the success of any operational commander. This spectrum of lessons learned encompasses both the study of military history and theory, and the lessons acquired from modern operations, exercises, and training events. The first type of lessons learned, the study of military history and theory, trains the mind to think operationally. It helps to develop the "mental agility"<sup>1</sup> necessary to overcome unforeseen events caused by the Clausewitzian fog and friction of war.

Currently U.S. Navy officers, and to some extent officers from the other services as well, are not receiving the operational art foundation that they require to quickly become outstanding operational commanders. A critical reevaluation of officer Professional Military Education (PME) as it pertains to the study of military history and theory must be conducted for all services. The warranted amount of additional training and focus must then be incorporated to ensure that all potential operational commanders have this solid foundation in operational art.

Furthermore, operational commanders have neither the time nor the vehicle to enable them to effectively draw on the plethora of modern operational lessons learned. The Joint Universal Lessons Learned System (JULLS) database and After Action Reports (AARs) are a good start but neither the commander nor his staff have the time to sort through this myriad of data once "the balloon goes up." A National Joint Lessons Learned Support Team (NLLST) is badly needed.

## *COURSE OF DISCUSSION*

The intent of this paper is to demonstrate the need for further and better-focused PME for potential operational commanders, and the requirement for a NLLST (pronounced "nilst"), in the following manner. The first part of the paper focuses on the PME issue. It begins with a discussion of the great benefit of studying military history and theory for both the direct lessons learned to be gained and for training the mind to think operationally. Then the shortcomings of some of the armed services' current officer training curricula are discussed. Particular attention is given to the Navy's

lack of officer PME since it is the most deficient of the services in the area of military history and theory.

The second part of the paper shows how difficult it is for current operational commanders to draw on lessons learned from past operations and exercises. Primary focus is on the difficulties in using (and the dubious utility of) the current JULLS database. The final section discusses the merits of establishing a NLLST to directly support the Joint Force Commander (JFC) in overcoming these difficulties during times of crisis.

### *THE CASE FOR MILITARY HISTORY AND THEORY*

*History never repeats itself exactly, but it is a mistake to think that history has ended and we now live in a modern age with nothing to learn from the past.<sup>2</sup>*

--Sir James Cable

A firm foundation in military history and theory is important to the JFC, and all officers for that matter, for many reasons. One of these reasons is that the study of military history can provide certain examples of operational lessons learned that modern commanders can directly benefit from. An example of this is the requirement for unity of command—a lesson relearned many times throughout history and so clearly demonstrated in the battle for Leyte Gulf in the Philippines in World War II.<sup>3</sup> These lessons learned are timeless and their utility is such that they tend to be incorporated into doctrine and theory such as the Principles of War.<sup>4</sup>

Another reason the study of military history and theory is important to the commander is that it trains the mind to think operationally. As Arthur Athens sums up, the three main purposes of military theory are, "First, theory serves as a basis for historical study; second, theory, as Clausewitz stated, trains the mind of the commander; and third, theory clarifies the "normal" pattern of war."<sup>5</sup> This was true in 1922, when Captain (later Rear Admiral) Reginald Belknap said in an address to the Naval War College,

One acquires true appreciation for the principles of war through observing how their application or their disregard has made for success or failure in the past, and wider reading shows more and varied instances of similar results from similar measures. The mind is thus

broadened, the memory stocked, and the imagination stimulated, all of which are essential to preparation for high military responsibility.<sup>6</sup>

and is still true today, as Richard Davis recently put it,

We must be prepared for the unexpected by studying how other military professionals handled the confusion and complexities of combat. Knowing military history, in other words, directly benefits the professional soldier.<sup>7</sup>

This training of the commander's mind is the key reason why we must ensure that our officers receive a firm foundation in military history and theory. Sound doctrine, tactics and technical knowledge are all very important to the planning and execution stages of any campaign. But when the battle doesn't progress as expected, and a new plan or maneuver must be developed and executed quickly, the commander must be able to rely on training that can "...[enable him] to view a situation and bring the breadth of his intellectual powers to bear in developing a correct plan."<sup>8</sup> This is precisely what in-depth training in history and theory provides the commander. "Without a proper grounding in theory, the mind will not be prepared for the unexpected, the unique, the unclear."<sup>9</sup>

Some would argue that this study of military history and theory isn't critical to the modern commander—that the correct application of sound doctrine is sufficient for victory. On the contrary, sound doctrine *is* critical for military success but just where is that sound doctrine derived from? A key element in the formulation of all doctrine is the incorporation of past operational lessons learned. This is especially true of broad, timeless lessons learned such as the Principles of War. A foundation in the study of military history provides the basis for analysis of modern operations in order to draw out new lessons learned for possible incorporation into doctrine. This isn't to say that all important specific lessons learned are automatically incorporated into doctrine and that doctrine alone can solve all unexpected situations that arise in combat. The operational commander must be able to think on his feet when faced with the unexpected, and a firm foundation in where joint doctrine is derived from gives him that ability, as described above.

Some feel that the development of more sophisticated information technologies will completely lift the fog of war and thus, the need for a commander to react quickly and instinctively to

a surprise enemy action will be lessened. This belief that "military technical revolutions" will lift the fog of war so completely that there will be no unexpected developments in combat fails to account for the factors of friction and human nature.<sup>10</sup> As Williamson Murray puts it, "...we must not believe that new concepts or capabilities will negate the fundamental nature of war. Friction together with fog, ambiguity, chance, and uncertainty will dominate future battlefields as it has in the past." and "Friction will not disappear in the next century; it is a fact of life."<sup>11</sup> These new information technologies may go far in showing the commander what the enemy is currently doing, but they cannot tell him what the enemy is thinking or what he will do in the other than near-term future. Furthermore, they may dramatically increase the amount of *information* the commander is inundated with, but not necessarily the amount of useful *intelligence* he receives. The operational commander must have a sound foundation in military history and theory to be able to deal correctly with these unforeseen events. As Athens states, "When unique situations arise, theory is the starting point for adjustments, and the study of theory and military history by critical analysis equips the commander's mind for the intellectual challenge of creative thought."<sup>12</sup>

The true merit of military theory and history then, is the Clausewitzian idea that the study of it is essential for the commander to develop a framework with which to analyze past, and plan for future, military operations:

For Clausewitz the purpose of theory was the education of the mind, the achievement of understanding: "It is meant to educate the mind of the future commander, or, more accurately, to guide him in his self education, not to accompany him to the battlefield."<sup>13</sup> Theory's purpose was the understanding of the constituent elements of war, particularly the relationship of ends to means.<sup>14</sup>

Given then, the importance of the study of military history and theory, how well are we striving to incorporate it into our officers' PME?

#### *SHORTCOMINGS IN THE CURRENT OFFICER PME SYSTEM*

*Teaching a man how to think rather than what to think is a far better method of preparing him for the unexpectedness of war.*

—John A. English<sup>15</sup>

A solid foundation in operational art through the repeated study of military history and theory is essential for the success of operational commanders. Each of the armed services has some form of PME for its officer corps. The length and depth of these PME curricula vary greatly between the services, as does the attention given to the study of military history and theory. The frequency of exposure is also critical as Lieutenant Colonel Richard Davis states in his article, "The Case for Officer Professional Military Education: A View from the Trenches," "Since our minds are formed by the knowledge and ideas we receive over time, it is very important that we design a long-term PME program that properly develops our professional thinking."<sup>16</sup> Additionally, Davis (referencing Clausewitz) sums up the need for an in-depth course of study:

If ideas taught through PME are limited to accepted dogma, established models, or mastery of rote procedures, or if the goal of a PME program is to provide only a superficial familiarity with a wide range of topics, then we will be poorly prepared for the unexpected or for situations that do not fit the patterns we have learned. A good PME program, therefore, should help provide us with the ability to see the combat situation in a comprehensive fashion and to exercise the mental freedom necessary to dominate events and not be dominated by them.<sup>17</sup>

A brief description of how well each service addresses the needs for repeated and in-depth study of military history and theory follows.

The U.S. Marine Corps has one of the more comprehensive PME programs when it comes to focusing on military history and theory. Initial exposure to these topics occurs during pre-commissioning training as midshipmen at the U.S. Naval Academy or in an ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corps) unit. The level of exposure ranges from fairly decent to cursory at best and is proportional to the relative time available to the massive task of "making second lieutenants." Candidates at Officer Candidate School (OCS) have very limited exposure due to the short duration of the course. The next step for all Marine Officers is six months at the Basic School (TBS). Here the exposure deepens as examples from military history are used to illustrate basic concepts and doctrine.<sup>18</sup> It is significant to note here at how early the Marine Corps begins to introduce the importance of studying military history and theory. This importance is further reinforced by the

establishment of a professional reading program and the publishing of the "Commandant's Reading List"<sup>19</sup> This well thought out list is broken down by major topic and by rank of the Marines intended to read it. The intent of establishing this reading program is stated by

Major General Marvin T. Hopgood:

The revitalized Professional Reading Program seeks to focus our Marines on warfighting through historic example and personal narrative. As today's Marines and sailors confront a diverse range of challenges, they can be best prepared only when they—in the words of the Commandant—have truly "forged their minds on the anvil of professional knowledge and learning."<sup>20</sup>

A reading program may seem like a small step towards a dedicated study of military history and theory but it (and the quote above) shows the Marine Corps recognition of the importance of this critical PME.

As captains, a select number of Marines will attend a nine-month course at the Amphibious Warfare School. Most of the remainder will attend a six month course at one of the advanced specialty schools (Advanced infantry Officer Course, Advanced Artillery Course, etc.). At these schools there is no dedicated course in military history or theory per se, however, examples from history and Marine Corps doctrine are infused in all of the training. Eventually an even smaller group will be selected by a board to attend one of the junior war college programs. War college completion, either through residence or correspondence, is essentially a prerequisite for advancement. Finally, a very select group will attend a senior war college program, again chosen by a board and critical for advancement. A discussion of the war college programs' focus on military history and theory is at the end of this section. As can be seen from above, the Marine Corps does a fairly decent job of exposing their officers to the importance of studying history and theory. However, some have termed the current Marine Corps approach to the actual teaching of these concepts "maintenance" rather than "innovative" learning—meaning "the instilling of fixed ideas, methods and rules for dealing with known recurring situations."<sup>21</sup> These deficiencies should be examined and corrected if present, but the current program is still fairly solid.

The Army's PME program and exposure to military history and theory is similar to that of the Marine Corps. Emphasis on the importance of history is demonstrated at all levels beginning with precommissioning. The Army's Web page on military history training lists the goal of the study of history in all of the Army's officer PME courses.<sup>22</sup> For example, the goal of teaching history in the Officer Advanced Course (OAC) is stated as follows: "Integrate historical awareness and critical thinking skills derived from military history methodologies into the training and education of self and subordinate leaders."<sup>23</sup>

The Officer Basic Course after commissioning is only 6-8 weeks long, vice six months for the Marines, and consequently gives the new second lieutenants much less exposure to these concepts, but the emphasis is still there. The Army also has a professional reading program to further emphasize the need for continuing PME. The Officer Advanced Course is similar to the Marine courses and is six months long. The course primarily consists of tactical decision-making and staff training, but, as shown above, includes a strong focus on the importance of military history and theory. As senior captains some Army officers will attend the Combined Arms and Services Staff School (CAS<sup>3</sup>). This school is nine weeks long and is nearly pure staff officer training. There are plans to combine the OAC and the CAS<sup>3</sup> into one course in the near future.<sup>24</sup> The great importance of—and selection process for—attending both junior and senior war college courses is similar to that of the Marine Corps. As demonstrated above, in the Army as in the Marine Corps, exposure to military history and theory is infused with an officer's basic PME.

The Air Force also has a well-thought-out series of officer PME curricula.<sup>25</sup> This PME plan differs from that of the Marine Corps and Army in that there is no TBS or Officer Basic Course equivalent immediately after commissioning, although there is talk of creating one.<sup>26</sup> Currently, after receiving some exposure to military history and theory during precommissioning training—the amount dependent upon the commissioning source (i.e., Air Force Academy vs. ROTC vs. OCS)—Air Force officers do not receive additional formalized training in these areas until they attend Squadron Officer's School (SOS) at the captain level. As the Air Force's Air University Web page

puts it, "Professional military education for Air Force officers begins with Squadron Officer School."<sup>27</sup> The vast majority of Air Force officers attend this seven-week school, and most do so in residence. Though much shorter than either the nine or six-month Marine or Army equivalents, the officers are still exposed to military history and theory in the form of examples used to illustrate the basis for Air Force doctrine. The next phase of Air Force PME is attendance at one of the war colleges' junior courses. As in the Marine Corps and Army, USAF officers are selected for war college by a board and attendance is nearly a prerequisite for advancement. The same can be said for selection to a follow-on senior war college course. As one can see, the Air Force PME program, while not as extensive or well-focused on military history and theory as that of the Marine Corps or Army, is still a solid and well-planned curriculum. Incidentally, a Chief of Staff Reading List, and unit level PME called the Project Warrior program, further support this program.<sup>28</sup>

The Navy's complete lack of emphasis on post-commissioning officer PME,<sup>29</sup> especially with regard to military history and theory, can quickly be seen with a visit to its Internet Web page.<sup>30</sup> Unlike the other services where one can easily find links to information on comprehensive PME programs with names like "Marine Corps University," "Center for Army Leadership," and "Air University," the Navy's Web sight has no such information. The links do not exist because the program does not exist. After searching the site map for any reference to officer training, PME, leadership, etc., the only possible lead one can find is a link in the alphabetical search listing to the Navy's new Leadership Continuum program. Maybe not so coincidentally, this link leads to a dead end with the error message, "Web site does not exist." Though the Leadership Continuum program does actually exist, how does it compare to the other services' officer PME programs described above?—not very well. The Leadership Continuum program consists of a series of *two-week* courses that officers will attend at various transitions in their careers (e.g., post-commissioning, department head, command, etc.).<sup>31</sup> Each course consists of lectures designed to provide the officer with the basic leadership tools he or she will require during their next level of assignment.<sup>32</sup> These are "nuts and bolts" type tools that, while useful in the daily duties of all officers, are not designed to prepare

the Navy officer for command at the operational level. There are no military case studies presented, no study of the theory of war, no wargaming, etc.—all of which are critical to the development of future JFCs. This new leadership training program is certainly not without merit, and undeniably needed in some form or another since up until now there has been no formalized leadership training of any real benefit to Navy officers. However, the Navy is overlooking an even larger need for providing a sound operational foundation for its officers. This severe lack of operational art background puts Navy officers serving on a joint staff, or in the role of a JFC, at a distinct disadvantage with respect to their Army, Marine Corps and Air Force counterparts. Under this current plan, the first time a Navy officer could hope to be exposed to these important concepts would be at the war college level. Illustrative of how “too little, too late” this is, Navy officers in a seminar on operational art at the Naval War College in December 1997, actually came to their feet in frustration at the end of the session when it became painfully obvious to them how little of these crucial concepts they had been exposed to compared to officers of the other services. The selection process used to decide which Navy officers will attend a war college can be used to demonstrate the relative importance that the Navy places on this valuable training as compared to that of the other services. Unlike the formal and highly competitive selection boards held by the other services, the Navy allows warfare community (surface, submarine, aviation, etc.) representatives to decide unilaterally who should attend from their communities. This method can lead to just filling quotas vice selecting the Navy’s “best and brightest” based on their command potential and past performance. An additional example of the relatively low importance the Navy places on the value of war college education is the fact that the junior and senior courses are nearly identical in content. Subsequently, officers attend only one course at the Naval War College as opposed to the other services where the senior course builds on the junior course and top-performing officers attend both. This is an unfortunate lost learning opportunity for Navy officers and indicative to that service’s lack of focus on the importance of military history and theory.

As has been shown, the U.S. Marine Corps and Army, and to some extent the Air Force, expose their officers to the study of military history and theory fairly well. The Navy on the other hand, is well behind the other services in the depth of its officer PME. Even though all the services address the study of theory and history to some extent, there is still room for improvement in each service, and at all levels of instruction. The shortcomings lie in two main areas—frequency of exposure to the concepts, and depth of study. Some services, notably the Marine Corps and Army as mentioned above, are better at exposing their officers to this course of study more frequently than are the others, but all the services could improve their JME curricula by adding depth and focus to their programs.

#### *A WORD ABOUT THE WAR COLLEGES*

To complete the discussion on officer PME with regard to the in-depth study of operational art through history and military theory, a short examination of potential shortcomings of the war colleges is in order. Williamson Murray concludes his 1997 article “Clausewitz Out, Computer In: Military Culture and Technological Hubris” with a rather scathing assessment of U.S. war colleges:

Despite the instinctive attraction of the Clausewitzian approach for American officers in the post-Vietnam period, there has been no abiding change in the military’s cultural attitudes toward education. Teaching duty on the faculties of professional military schools is still not “career enhancing”; the navy [sic] still refuses to send a substantial number of its best officers to any school of professional military education; the Army War College, despite an impressive faculty, is an institution where war rarely appears in the curriculum; the army [sic] has turned one of its few truly innovative educational experiments of the 1980’s, SAMS<sup>33</sup>, into a humdrum planning exercise; the Air War College, after a short period of professional military education, has returned to the golf course; and finally, the National War College remains buried within the army’s [sic] budget, where it simply fails to get the support it needs.<sup>34</sup>

These issues if true, as in the Navy’s case, are extremely troubling and need to be carefully addressed by the respective services. Martin van Creveld echoes some of these shortcomings in his highly critical assessment of the war colleges in his book concerning officer PME.<sup>35</sup> His recommendations to rectify these problems include consolidating all war colleges into a single National Defense University in order to avoid duplication; staffing this university with very senior, upwardly mobile

officers and top-notch civilian professors to insure the highest quality instruction; lowering the age at which officers enter the staff college course (junior course) in order to be able to subsequently enter the senior course at a younger age while they are still “on their way to the top”; and focus the first year of instruction almost entirely on military operations and then extend the senior course for a second year for select top level graduates.<sup>36</sup> These recommendations have a lot of merit and should also be closely considered by the services.

*A SOUND FOUNDATION IN OPERATIONAL ART, and MODERN LESSONS LEARNED:*

*BRIDGING THE GAP*

The first part of this paper argued that highly effective Joint Force Commanders must possess the type of “mental agility”<sup>37</sup> that only comes from a solid foundation in operational art. This ability to think operationally is crucial for the success of any campaign but, as professed in the introduction, the commander needs an additional set of tools to help him or her truly excel in future conflicts—corporate knowledge of today’s operational lessons learned. The next section discusses the shortcomings that are inherent in the current system (JULLS and AARs) that the JFC has to rely on for these lessons learned. It then argues that, as stated in the introduction, a new vehicle must be developed to enable the commander to quickly and effectively draw on the plethora of lessons learned from past operations and exercises.

*THE JFC’s NEED FOR LESSONS LEARNED AND THE SHORTCOMINGS OF JULLS*

In addition to possessing a firm foundation in the history and theory of war, JFCs must have an efficient vehicle for effectively reviewing and incorporating modern lessons learned into their campaign and operation plans. The current vehicles for acquiring these lessons learned are a number of databases and AARs. These lessons learned databases including the Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL), Navy Lessons Learned database (NLLDB), Air Force Center for Lessons Learned (AFCLL), Marine Corps Lessons Learned System (MCLLS), Coast Guard Universal Lessons

Learned (CGULL), and the Joint Universal Lessons Learned System (JULLS). These databases contain a huge amount of information, some of it useful and some of it not, from past exercises and operations.

The trouble in using these databases in a conflict lies in several areas. First, as one can see from the list above, there are just too many databases to be able to search quickly in a time of crisis. Second, the number of entries in each database (13,000 in the JULLS alone)<sup>38</sup> is staggering and the database design is not very user friendly. Finally, the quality of some of these "lessons learned" is somewhat suspect, making their utility dubious. As an example, let's say a JFC or his staff wanted to search for lessons learned from operations DESERT SHIELD and DESERT STORM. Assuming, for a joint commander or staff, that JULLS is the most logical database to start searching in, they may turn to this system and type the word "desert" into the search field. After a lengthy pause, a count of 1620 entries would come up.<sup>39</sup> If the search were further narrowed to just "DESERT STORM," the field would be reduced to 233. This is still a huge amount of data to sort through. Additionally, 233 entries contain "lessons learned" ranging from "AAFES Did Not Take Over Direct Operation of Tactical Field Exchange" and "Absentee Ballots for Deployed Personnel" to "Airbase Point Air Defense/Short Range Air Defense" and from "War Termination" to "Wartime Awards."<sup>40</sup> While all of this information may be important to different components during a crisis, campaign, or exercise, one can see that the current JULLS database requires the joint commander to sort through a huge amount of chaff to get to the wheat of truly useful operational lessons learned. Given these shortcomings, it's not surprising that JULLS even contains an entry where *the lesson learned* was that a command wasn't using the lessons learned database.<sup>41</sup>

In all fairness, the Joint Staff has recognized some of these JULLS shortcomings and is currently working on ways to improve the database. Responsibility for the database has been moved to an operational branch of the Joint Center for Lessons Learned (JCLL) located at the Joint Warfighting Center (JWFC) at Fort Monroe, Virginia.<sup>42</sup> The JCLL is planning a major overhaul of the JULLS database by trying to remove irrelevant entries and by archiving all lessons learned prior

to August 1, 1990, except 373 lessons from operation JUST CAUSE (Panama 1989-1990). Other improvements include linking the entries to the Universal Joint Task List (UJTL) and categorizing them as doctrine, organization, training, material, leadership development, or personnel.<sup>43</sup>

Additionally, the JCLL is planning on sending analysts into the field to observe exercises to aid in improving the quality of lessons learned submissions.<sup>44</sup> This is critical since, as

General Hal Hornberg, commander of the JWFC, writes in the Winter 1997 issue of the JCLL bulletin, "Unfortunately, and to our surprise, none of the 51 JULLS contained in the most recent JAARs [Joint After Action Reports] were considered a "golden nugget."<sup>45</sup> "Golden Nuggets" are defined as "excellent lessons learned with potential value to the entire joint community."<sup>46</sup>

These improvements should make the JULLS database much more user-friendly, but it is still just a database. Someone must still sit down and sort through an ever-growing number of entries to try to find the "golden nuggets" that apply to the current situation. U.S. European Command tries to alleviate this problem by creating database specialists on the Joint Task Force (JTF) staffs,

We send some of our joint universal lessons learned (JULLS) specialists to the JTF. Putting them in the game at the outset ensures that future JTFs benefit from past experiences. *The pace of JTF operations is usually too fast to allow the staff the luxury of trying to remember all the lessons learned at any "hot wash."* [emphasis added]<sup>47</sup>

This is a grand idea as long as the unified command can spare the manpower, and as long as these "JULLS specialists" are given the time and training to truly become just that. The more telling part of the quote may be the sentiment of the last sentence—JTF staffs are too heavily tasked to be able to sort through all of these huge databases during times of crisis. Even with the future database improvements described above, it's safe to assume that all JTF commanders would echo this sentiment. Furthermore, the nature of most lessons learned database entries are such that they do not contain big-picture operational lessons learned (e.g., scheme of maneuver considerations, etc.). These lessons may be contained in JAARs, but here again is a huge amount of material that the JFC or his staff would have to sort through. With these points in mind, one can see that a real need exists to create a team of lessons learned specialists who have the time and expertise required to provide the

JFC with the corporate knowledge of major lessons learned from past exercises and operations. The answer is a NLLST.

### *THE CONCEPT OF A NLLST*

The plethora of lessons learned available from exercises and operations, the limitations of the current lessons learned databases, and the lack of time and manpower available to JFC staffs to analyze and present these operational lessons learned to the commander, beg the need for the establishment of a National Lessons Learned Support Team (NLLST). The precedent for creation of this team could be the National Intelligence Support Team (NIST) concept already in use. The NIST is a "tailorable" team comprised of intelligence analysts, specialists, and technicians that provide the JFC with an extremely powerful intelligence tool.<sup>48</sup> A NLLST could be constructed in much the same manner. It would be comprised of a mobile team of lessons learned specialists and analysts that could assist the JFC in ensuring that appropriate lessons learned have been incorporated into the current operation or exercise. These specialists would include both military officers and civilian experts from military think-tanks such the Center for Naval Analysis (CNA) and the Rand Corporation. Additionally, it's crucial that a military historian be included on the team to both interject historical lessons learned, and to record new lessons as they are learned.

These lessons learned experts would be required to possess several important skills. First, they all would have to be well-schooled in the history and theory of war for the reasons described in the first part of this paper. Second, they must be extremely familiar with all of the current lessons learned databases and be true experts at manipulating them. Third, this team must be intimately familiar with joint doctrine and the various services' specific doctrines. Finally, the members of the NLLST must be experts at combat analysis. This skill is crucial to the collection of "golden nugget" type lessons learned from all exercises and operations and would greatly decrease the trouble of separating the operational-level wheat from the chaff. Additionally, the combination of all of these

skills would be a great asset in developing recommendations to the Joint Staff and individual services for changes to their respective doctrines.

The NLLST could be established under the Joint Staff J-2 or J-7 divisions, or preferably as part of the JCLL since it fits so nicely into their mission statement: "To collect, process, analyze, and distribute joint information and lessons learned from operations, training events, and other sources to enhance combat effectiveness and interoperability."<sup>49</sup> Ideally an O-6 or O-7 grade officer with joint staff experience, or civilian equivalent, would lead the team so as to provide the JFC with advice and not "orders." This team should consist of primarily full time members but could be temporarily augmented with additional experts. The permanent members would have the time and resources to become the focused, dedicated core of lessons learned specialists as described above. The augmentees would be high level personnel from a joint staff involved in a recent or similar operation or possibly cultural or historical experts for the area of operations. In times of crisis this NLLST would rapidly deploy to the location of the JFC and would provide the staff with on-scene lessons learned expertise during both the estimate and planning phases. During the execution phase, this team of lessons learned experts would continue to provide immediate information as required. This timely access to lessons learned expertise would quickly make the NLLST the commander's first source of corporate operational lessons learned.

## *CONCLUSIONS*

Operational Commanders must be prepared to utilize the full spectrum of lessons learned in order to be truly effective. The study of military history and theory is absolutely essential for training Joint Force Commanders to think operationally and thus enable them to "...bring with them an ingrained knowledge of military theory to succeed in unique, complex, and ambiguous situations encountered in war."<sup>50</sup> Currently, the PME programs of the armed services are each, to some degree, lacking in this fundamental training. The Marine Corps and Army programs are fairly solid but not without shortcomings that should be evaluated and corrected. The Air Force's program is headed in

the right direction but needs to increase both its depth and breadth. The Navy's program, on the other hand, is nearly non-existent and needs to be created immediately. The Marine Corps program could be used as a starting point for the development of a solid Navy PME program.

There is much criticism for all of the services' war colleges and, since they play such a crucial role in the training of future JFCs, serious attention should be given to correcting these deficiencies. Only then will future operational commanders be able to echo Admiral Chester W. Nimitz's words when he wrote: "I credit the Naval War College for such success [as] I achieved in strategy and tactics during the war."<sup>51</sup>

JFCs have a critical requirement to incorporate modern and historical lessons learned into their operational plans. The current lessons learned databases are unwieldy and time consuming to use. JFC staffs are usually too busy during times of crisis to be able to extract pertinent lessons learned from the databases. Furthermore, these databases often do not contain the big picture operational lessons learned that JFCs truly need. The creation of an expert team of lessons learned specialists called a NLLST would alleviate this problem and provide the JFC the lessons learned he needs to be most effective. A solid foundation in military history and theory, combined with the effective use of modern operational lessons learned, is the key to success for all of tomorrow's Joint Force Commanders.

#### *SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS*

- ◆ Reevaluate the PME program of each of the armed services with regard to the depth and frequency of the teaching of military history and theory.
- ◆ Closely reevaluate the war colleges' curricula for possible shortcomings
- ◆ Continue to improve the JULLS and service specific lessons learned databases.
- ◆ Create a NLLST to provide the JFC with expert advice on incorporating past operational lessons learned into future operations.

## NOTES

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- <sup>1</sup> Richard L. Davis, "The Case for Officer Professional Military Education." Airpower Journal, Winter 1989, 42.
- <sup>2</sup> James Cable, "Gunboat Diplomacy's Future," Proceedings, August 1986, 41.
- <sup>3</sup> Richard Bates, et al., Chapter II: "Allied Arrangements," The Battle for Leyte Gulf, October 1944. Statistical and Tactical Analysis, Vol. I: Preliminary Operations Until October 17<sup>th</sup> 1944, Including Battle Off Formosa. (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Naval Personnel, Department of the Navy, 1953), 9-12.
- <sup>4</sup> U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Doctrine for Joint Operations (Joint Pub 3.0) (Washington, D.C.: February 1, 1995), A-1.
- <sup>5</sup> Arthur J. Athens, "Theory on the Battlefield: Nuisance or Necessity?" Marine Corps Gazette, January 1995, 33.
- <sup>6</sup> Reginald R. Belknap, "Set and Drift." Naval War College Review, Spring 1997, 115.
- <sup>7</sup> Davis, 41.
- <sup>8</sup> Julian Corbett, paraphrased by Athens, 34.
- <sup>9</sup> Athens, 35.
- <sup>10</sup> Williamson Murray, "War, Theory, Clausewitz, and Thucydides: The Game May Change but the Rules Remain," Marine Corps Gazette, January 1997, 62-69.
- <sup>11</sup> Williamson Murray, "Thinking About Revolutions in Military Affairs," Joint Forces Quarterly, Summer 1997, 76.
- <sup>12</sup> Athens, 34.
- <sup>13</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, quoted in Richard M. Swain, "'The Hedgehog and the Fox': Jomini, Clausewitz, and History." Naval War College Review, Autumn 1990, 102.
- <sup>14</sup> Swain, 102.
- <sup>15</sup> John A. English, quoted in Robert J. Muise, "Officer Education: The Flawed System," Marine Corps Gazette, June 1994, 29.
- <sup>16</sup> Davis, 43.
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>18</sup> Paul K. Schreiber, Major, U.S. Marine Corps, interview with author, 15 January 1998, Naval War College, Newport, RI.; Marine Corps University Web Page, <<http://www.usmc.mil/info.nsf/info>>, 28 January 1998.
- <sup>19</sup> Marvin T. Hopgood, Jr., "The Professional Reading Program," Marine Corps Gazette, July 1996, 44.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>21</sup> Muise, 30.

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<sup>22</sup> "Military History," Leader Education Training and Development Division (LETDD), <<http://www-cgsc.army.mil/cal/LETDD/common1.htm#Military+History>>, 28 January 1998.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> "Captain PME," Center for Army Leadership, <<http://www-cgsc.army.mil/cal/LETDD/cpt-pme.htm>>, 28 January 1998.

<sup>25</sup> "Air University: Home of Air Force Professional Military Education," 15 April 1997, <<http://www.au.af.mil/au/fs97-01.html>>, 28 January 1998.

<sup>26</sup> Robert D. Critchlow, Major, U.S. Air Force, interview with author, 15 January 1998, Naval War College, Newport, RI.

<sup>27</sup> "Air University: Home of Air Force Professional Military Education," 15 April 1997, <<http://www.au.af.mil/au/fs97-01.html>>, 28 January 1998.

<sup>28</sup> Davis, 37.

<sup>29</sup> Navy Midshipmen at the Naval Academy and ROTC units receive some exposure to military history similar to that of their Army and Air Force counterparts.

<sup>30</sup> "U.S. Navy Welcome Aboard," <<http://www.navy.mil/>>, 28 January 1998.

<sup>31</sup> Chief of Naval Operations, "Navy Leadership Continuum," (U.S. Navy message, DTG 301130Z JUL 97, CNO Washington DC), (30 July 1997).

<sup>32</sup> Joanne Gilchrist, Commander, USN, Office of the Chief of Naval Education and Training, telephone conversation with author, 16 January 1998; Scott McDonald, Lieutenant, USN, Naval education and Training Center, Newport, RI, telephone conversation with author, 16 January 1998.

<sup>33</sup> School of Advanced Military Science (SAMS). The Army's second-year course at Leavenworth.

<sup>34</sup> Williamson Murray, "Clausewitz Out, Computer In: Military Culture and Technological Hubris," The National Interest, Summer 1997, 64.

<sup>35</sup> Martin van Creveld, The Training of Officers: From Military Professionalism to Irrelevance (New York: The Free Press 1990), 98-110.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 105-110.

<sup>37</sup> Davis, 42.

<sup>38</sup> "Improving The Joint Lessons Learned System," Joint Center for Lessons Learned Bulletin, Winter 1997, 35.

<sup>39</sup> U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Universal Lessons Learned (JULLS) Database, Washington, D.C.: The Joint Staff/J7, September 1997.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> "Use of JULLS and Exercise Planning," JULLS No. 30240-05238, date 10 February 1992. Unclassified. Joint Universal Lessons Learned (JULLS) Database, Washington, D.C.: The Joint Staff/J7, September 1997.

<sup>42</sup> "Lessons Learned: Joint Center," Joint Force Quarterly, Summer 1997, 116.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>44</sup> Pat Clark, Commander, U.S. Navy. Joint Center for Lessons Learned (JCLL), Joint Warfighting Center, Fort Monroe, VA, telephone interview with the author, 16 January 1998.

<sup>45</sup> Hal M. Hornberg, "Message From the Commander," Joint Center for Lessons Learned Bulletin, Winter 1997, iii.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Robert D. Chelberg, Jack W. Ellertson, and David H. Shelley, "At the Center of the Vortex," Field Artillery, October 1993, 15.

<sup>48</sup> Wayne F. Sweitzer, "Battlespace Information, Command and Control (C2), Operational Intelligence, and Systems Integration," Naval War College Publication NWC 2127A, September 1997, 16-17.

<sup>49</sup> Joint Warfighting Center – Joint Center for Lessons Learned Web Homepage.  
<http://www.jwfc.js.mil/pages/jcll.htm>

<sup>50</sup> Athens, 33.

<sup>51</sup> Chester W. Nimitz quoted by Murray, "Clausewitz Out, Computer In," 58.

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